

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-1

WASHINGTON POST
22 October 1983

File Only

Reagan Advisers Block Staff Ploy

By Lou Cannon
Washington Post Staff Writer

A group of longtime Reagan advisers last week thwarted a power play by White House chief of staff James A. Baker III and deputy chief of staff Michael K. Deaver to make Baker President Reagan's national security affairs adviser and to move Deaver into Baker's job, administration officials said yesterday.

These officials said Reagan tentatively had agreed to the plan, but discarded the idea at the urging of his outgoing national security affairs adviser, William P. Clark, who was backed by White House counselor Edwin Meese III, Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger and CIA Director William J. Casey.

The disclosure of what one official called "the Baker-Deaver option" provided a glimpse into the tangled power politics of the Reagan White House, where bitter policy disputes and personal feuding have been commonplace.

Clark, Meese and Weinberger have been trusted Reagan associates since his first term as governor of California, beginning in 1966. Casey was Reagan's campaign manager in 1980.

When Clark arrived at the White House early in 1982, he and Deaver were friends and allies.

But their relationship deteriorated in recent months, and Reagan took note of this "friction" when he granted Clark's request to be named secretary of the interior. None of these officials would comment publicly about the maneuvering, except for Weinberger, who

said he "played no role" in the president's decision. But several officials confirmed the discussion of the plan.

They said that Baker, who has been chief of staff throughout the administration, long has talked of acquiring experience in a foreign policy post and that Deaver, the aide closest to the Reagan family, would like the chief of staff's post.

However, those opposed to the idea cited Baker's lack of experience in foreign affairs, coincidentally using the argument that Baker's allies had made against Clark. They also questioned whether Deaver had the background in substantive issues for the chief of staff's post, where even Baker's adversaries acknowl-

edge his competence. One official said the Baker-Deaver option arose quickly as "a target of opportunity" after Clark decided that the pressures of the national security adviser's job had become too severe and asked Reagan to name him as the replacement for outgoing Interior Secretary James G. Watt.

The obvious choice to replace Clark was the man who Reagan eventually selected, Robert C. McFarlane, who had served as deputy national security affairs adviser before becoming the U.S. special envoy to the Middle East.

When Clark resigned last Thursday, administration officials said that McFarlane would be named national security adviser. But they backed off this prediction on Friday, saying that conservatives were mounting a campaign to make U.N. Ambassador Jeane J. Kirkpatrick

the national security adviser. The Kirkpatrick boomlet, strongly supported by Casey, did not make headway because she was not acceptable to Secretary of State George P. Shultz, officials said. It was at this time, on Friday, Oct. 14, that Deaver and Baker came up with their idea.

One official said Shultz had "signed off on the Baker option," which he said was offered in the form of Baker as an alternative to Kirkpatrick. But it was not known

if Shultz, who has complained about White House dominance in foreign policy decision making, was enthusiastic about the idea.

Reporters had been advised on Friday that the McFarlane appointment was likely to occur over the weekend, but the maneuvering had the effect of delaying the decision. Reagan reportedly consulted with all his senior advisers and went with what one of them called "the safe choice" of McFarlane.

"Baker would have driven the conservatives up the wall, and Kirkpatrick would have provoked a crisis with both the White House staff and the secretary of state," said one official. "Bud [McFarlane] is less abrasive than Jeane and more acceptable than Baker."

Reagan met privately with Kirkpatrick before announcing McFarlane's appointment last Monday and persuaded her to stay on at the United Nations at least through the end of the General Assembly session in December.

Kirkpatrick's name was prompt-

CONTINUED

2.

ly suggested by some conservatives as a co-chairman of the Reagan-Bush campaign if she leaves the United Nations. The proposal, though taken seriously by campaign officials, did not advance beyond the discussion stage because Kirkpatrick is a Democrat who is opposed to some of Reagan's domestic policies.

Instead, Mayor Margaret Hance of Phoenix and Nancy Reynolds, a longtime associate of the Reagans, are under consideration for the co-chairman's post.